# CHAPTER II FROM

## DANTE TO SAINT CATHERINE

"Ha, mater pHsaima, sponsa Chrlstll quoa In aqua et spiritu general tibi filios ad ruboreml Non Charitas, non Astraea, sed filiae aanguieugae factae aunt tibi minis."—
Dante, ***£j>ut.*** viil. 7. [6 6]

FULLY to understand Catherine's political work and mission, we must turn to the states and rulers with which and with whom she was to be brought into direct contact.

The " Babylonian Captivity " of the Popes at Avignon, which had begun with Clement V in 1305, was still, to some extent, the dominant feature in the situation. It was on Clement's death, in 1314, that the voice had been heard of "a man who was a prophet," and Dante, in his letter to the Italian cardinals at Carpentras, had renewed for Rome the lamentation of Jeremiah for Jerusalem.[1] Things had grown worse under Clement's successor, the Cahorsine John XXII (1316-1334). "The gold which is the holiness of virtues has grown dim in the Church," wrote Alvarus Pelagius, " for all covet material gold. Ordinations and the sacraments are bought and sold for gold. Whenever I entered the apartment of the chamberlain of our Lord the Pope, I saw brokers, and tables full of gold, and clerics counting and weighing florins."[2] Petrarca had written two poetical epistles to Benedict XII (1334-1342), exhorting him to return to Italy, and he duly offered a similar appeal in the name of Rome to the man who now sat on the papal throne, Clement VI (I342-I352).[3] In Clement, the typical Limousin pope, the corruption of this epoch of the Papacy was personified. Learned and eloquent, not without a certain magnanimity, his private life, both as archbishop and as pope, was scandalous, and such was the

[1] *Epist.* viii. 4.
[a] *De Planctu Ecchsiae,* II. 7. Cf. Dante, *Par.* xviii. 130-136 ; G. Villani, **xi.** 20.
[8] *Epltt. metr.j* Lib. I. 2, 5; Lib. II. 5.